

**AGENDA ITEM IV B**

**PROPOSED LETTER OF INTENT**

**SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY AND A&M COLLEGE**

**B.A. IN WOMEN'S STUDIES**

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##### **STAFF ANALYSIS**

###### **Appropriateness with the Role, Scope and Mission**

The proposed program is consistent with the role, scope and mission statement for Southern University and A&M College (SUBR) as stated in the Board of Regents Master Plan for Public Postsecondary Education: 2001.

###### **Potential for Unnecessary Program Duplication**

The potential for unnecessary program duplication is high. On June 26, 2003, the Board of Regents approved a baccalaureate program in Women's Studies at the University of New Orleans. A year earlier (April 25, 2002), the Board approved a B.A. program in Women's and Gender Studies at LSU, SUBR's proximate institution. The Letter of Intent from SUBR did not acknowledge the existence of two similar and recently-approved baccalaureate programs at UNO and LSU. In subsequent correspondence, SUBR was asked to address the issues of need and unnecessary program duplication directly. The University responded as follows:

###### **University:**

The proposed academic component of the Women's Studies program would seem to be a new initiative being pursued by SUBR. However, in the original draft of the proposal to establish a Women's Studies and Research Center, approval was being sought for a certificate, minor, and Bachelor of Arts degree in Women's Studies. At the suggestion of the Southern University Board of Supervisors, the formal academic program was deferred, to be resubmitted at a later time in order to allow for assessment and evaluation of the Center.

###### **Staff Response:**

The staff has on file a Letter of Intent for a Women's Studies and Research Center (WSRC) dated September 25, 1991 from the Southern University System. There is no mention in the proposal of academic programs. To date the staff has received neither a full proposal for the WSRC nor any proposals for academic programs associated with it.

**University:**

[LSU and UNO] remain supportive of the original objectives of Southern University to develop its academic program.

**Staff Response:**

No evidence was provided.

**University:**

The national educational agenda calls for multicultural and diversity education... [and] The persons with experience and/or a concentration in cultural diversity would be more marketable.

**Staff Response:**

No evidence was provided.

**University:**

Southern University has the opportunity to establish rather than follow trends with regard to Women's Studies by capitalizing on the experiences of existing programs while fashioning a more comprehensive and recognized program that is attentive to the particular needs of African-American and/or other women of color.

**Staff Response:**

The staff agrees that such a focus seems appropriate, theoretically; however, even if the proposed curriculum were focused exclusively on women of specific non-Anglo ethnic groups, the fundamental purpose of the program, the overall skill set of its graduates, and the envisioned professional prospects for those graduates would be nearly identical to those at LSU. Moreover, the staff observes that LSU's new program is currently following a Board of Regents external consultant recommendation to develop more faculty and courses focused on women in specific, non-Anglo ethnic groups. Therefore, it is not clear how a close focus on 'African-American and/or other women of color' would serve to distinguish the proposed program from the proximate one at LSU.

The staff concludes that SUBR has not adequately addressed the issue of program duplication. The staff is open to the possibility that a persuasive case could be made. Such a case should rest on a demonstration that LSU's program, after a reasonable period of implementation, has not produced sufficient numbers of graduates to meet demonstrable state needs. Any full proposal should also distinguish SUBR's curriculum from that of LSU and UNO in an appropriate manner.

### **Consistency with Desegregation Agreement**

The Desegregation Settlement Agreement does not provide for the development of a B.A. in Women's Studies at any predominantly black institution. Hence, mandates of the settlement agreement do not apply.

### **Adherence to specific Board of Regents criteria for funding**

From the proposal:

*All costs for the proposed program will come from existing state appropriations, in-kind services, release-time, grants and other sources already in place for the courses that comprise it.*

The University states that a program coordinator stipend (\$1000 per year) will be necessary, along with some funds for start-up equipment, supplies, and travel. One secretarial position will be required to assist the coordinator/advisor at \$18,500 per year, plus benefits. New costs therefore total an average of \$22,300 per year for the first four years of implementation.

### **STAFF SUMMARY**

The staff concludes that the Letter of Intent for the projected B.A. program in Women's Studies at SUBR clearly meets three of the four requirements of **Academic Affairs Policy 2.4 - Letter of Intent for Projected New Academic Programs**. However, the program appears to duplicate in both purpose and form the programs at LSU and UNO. Should the University proceed with a full proposal, the staff will, as is normal practice, forward it to LSU and UNO for review. Specifically, these two universities will be asked to: (1) assess the proposed program's prospective academic quality; and (2) evaluate the extent to which whether SUBR's proposed program may unnecessarily duplicate their own programs.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

*The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee approve the Letter of Intent for a B.A. program in Women's Studies at Southern University- Baton Rouge, effective immediately. Any forthcoming program proposal as result of this Letter of Intent shall specifically address possible unnecessary program duplication with existing similar programs at LSU and UNO. Accordingly, SUBR's proposal shall sent to LSU and UNO for evaluation and comment prior to staff assessment.*